

Freedom Road Transportation

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(248) 975-9701 Fax: (248) 975-9680
www.freedomroadtransportation.org

Good Afternoon Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present my support for the proposed Volunteer Driver Protection Act. My name is Linda Romanowski and as a Board Member, I am representing Freedom Road Transportation (FRT) a non-profit organization seeking to recruit, train and retain a pool of volunteer drivers to provide transportation services. FRT will provide transportation to senior citizens, people with disabilities and those living in poverty and do not have access to public transportation or do not have other options available to them.

FRT was the result of the collaboration efforts of many Human Service Agencies on behalf of people living in southeastern Michigan. Participants include Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority, Easter Seals, Macomb Oakland Regional Center, Common Ground, Community Living Services, Oakland Family Services, Area Agency on Aging 1-B, Training and Treatment Innovations, Angels' Place, Jewish Family Service, Arab Chaldean Council and North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA).

A volunteer-based driver program will help fill the transportation gaps by providing transportation to medical appointments, places of employment, shopping, entertainment, recreation, worship services, etc. In addition, this initiative can provide auxiliary services (feeder line to major transportation hubs) for many citizens and will thereby enhance the quality of life for many people otherwise isolated in their homes.

This proposed Legislation can assist us in the recruiting of volunteer drivers. Each of the agencies have years of experience working with volunteers, but volunteers are hesitant to drive their own vehicles due to concerns about insurance costs and liability issues. This legislation will ease the concerns of the volunteer driver.

This legislation will not eliminate or reduce the responsibility every non-profit organization has to maintain liability insurance coverage for volunteers. It will not replace the volunteer driver's responsibility to maintain automobile insurance coverage. This legislation will offer immunity from liability for volunteer drivers similar to the tort protection for volunteers of government agencies under MCL 691-1407. Seventeen other states have this protection for volunteers of non-profit organizations as well.

Your support of the Volunteer Driver Protection Act will help us assist the many Michigan citizens who will benefit by the services from volunteer drivers in their local community.

Thank you for your time,

Linda Romanowski
Freedom Road Board Member

March 3, 2011

Members of the Health Policy Committee,

Thank you for providing me an opportunity to speak to you today about the proposed legislation called the "Volunteer Drivers Protection Act". My name is Mike Daley and I am the Customer Services Manager at Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority. On behalf of the nearly 19,000 people with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities and children with severe emotional disturbances and their families we serve in Oakland County and along with the numerous human service agencies in our community, I would like to express our support for the Volunteer Drivers Protection Act.

Transportation is consistently one of the first barriers identified by the people we serve. The lack of affordable and easily accessible transportation can limit a person's ability to become involved within their community. Individualized planning and Person / Family Centered Planning process attempts to address transportation issues but only on a 'case by case' basis not on a large scale. At CMH we have attempted many times to address transportation from a 'system level' as well. Many committees, many meetings, but with little change or impact.

Beginning in late 2008 another effort began, CMH was not in the lead this time but rather partnered with a nonprofit organization called Freedom Road Transportation Authority. Freedom Road is a consumer owned and operated agency that has as their sole purpose and mission: address transportation. CMH provides in-kind donations of office space, computer, supplies, staff time, etc. But Freedom Road as an independent entity has worked over the last 2 ½ or 3 years to bring together human service agencies, community stakeholders and private citizens in collaboration efforts to address transportation.

The Freedom Road Work Group has grown from four members to over twenty members, representing a variety of human service agencies as well as individual citizens and business owners. This collaborative group is working to create a pool of volunteer drivers that will provide transportation for people with disabilities, senior citizens and those living with a low income in our community. As the group members talk to people in the community about becoming volunteer drivers, we have found people very willing to step forward and become volunteers. They understand the need for background checks, driving record checks, insurance verification, etc. But the question most frequently asked is 'what do I say to my insurance carrier or insurance company' about being a volunteer driver? That is why we are here today; the Volunteer Driver Protection Act legislation will help answer those questions. We believe this legislation will help to remove a person's hesitancy to become a volunteer driver by reducing their concerns about liability. This legislation can provide the same liability

Supporting the Advancement of Social Equity and Improved Quality of Life for those we serve.

protection available to volunteers of a government agency such as Dept of Human Services and Community Mental Health.

Freedom Road, along with OCCMHA and the many community partners, will continue to develop the infrastructure necessary to recruit, train and retain a group of volunteer drivers. The Volunteer Drivers Protection Act will be one of the key elements to the success of Freedom Road and other non-profit organizations around the state, to address the barriers to community involvement for the people we serve.

OCCMHA (or any Community Mental Health Services Program across Michigan) as a government entity cannot and should not address the transportation needs alone. Partnership involving both the public and private sectors is the only way we can address the issues and barriers to transportation facing the people we serve in the public mental health system.

Partnerships work. I am attaching a list of the agencies and individuals that are working with the Freedom Road work group. You will see the number of those involved has increased since we have received the interest and support about this important legislation from Senator Marleau.

Thank you again for your time and attention. I am available to answer any questions you may have at this time.

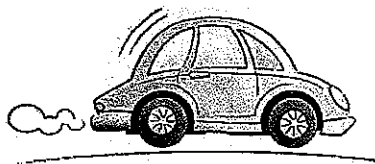
Mike Daley
Manager Customer Services
Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority
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Community List (no particular order)

- Freedom Road Transportation Authority
- Oakland County Community Mental Health Authority
- Area Agency on Aging 1-B
- Macomb Oakland Regional Center
- Linda Romanowski
- Easter Seals of Southeastern Michigan
- Community Network Services
- Ursula Bolton
- Steve Hill
- Arab Chaldean Council
- Michael Scott
- Alliance for the Mentally Ill—Oakland County
- Angel's Place
- Jewish Family Service
- Training Treatment Innovations
- Image Masters
- Richard Dixon
- Albert Rodriguez
- On the Border Restaurant
- Seema Garg
- North Oakland Transportation Authority
- Cheryl Allerding
- Jewish Vocational Services
- Troy Butler

Parties becoming involved since the "Volunteer Driver Protection Act" discussion

- Hope Network
- New Passages
- Mary Ann Butler
- Oakland Family Services
- Community Living Services
- Common Ground



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TO: Members of the Senate Health Policy Committee.
ATTN: Senator Jim Marleau, Chairman of the Senate Health Policy Committee.
DATE: 3 March 2011.

Dear Chairman Marleau and members of the Senate Health Policy Committee.

Good Afternoon Senators. The Freedom Road Transportation Authority, a 501 © 3 non-profit enterprise dedicated to providing affordable, reliable and efficient transportation services to persons in need, is pleased to write this letter of affirmation and support on behalf of Chairman Jim Marleau's proposed legislation, Volunteer Drivers Protection Act to provide immunity from liability for personal injury and property damage to individuals providing driving services without compensation to certain individuals. We believe that this measure is needed, timely, and an appropriate use of public policy to meet an important community service.

Oakland County, like many local communities around our state, has a problem with community transportation services. For many in Oakland County, and elsewhere, there are not reliable and responsive options to meet flexible, changing, and demanding transportation needs. For too many, this essential service is not being provided and, as a result, people are precluded from being able to participate fully in the greater community or to be self-reliant in addressing the many issues—shopping, medical appointments, recreation, and community participation—that face the individual as they must live their individual lives. For far too many persons face, due to the lack of transportation resources, the consequence of this need not being fulfilled is that they are left out of the mainstream of life. FRTA believes the Volunteer Drivers Protection Act is the correct approach to this problem. By empowering individuals, and through them, the communities that they live in, by allowing Good Samaritan's of any and every community the ability to perform needed and helpful tasks by protecting them from legal action while performing their duties, the Volunteer Drivers Protection Act shows it is a needed and powerful tool to correct this problem. By allowing citizens to provide necessary transportation services as a volunteer driver, the Volunteer Drivers Protection Act will go a long way in helping us address the provision of transportation in Oakland County, and elsewhere, that will become ever more necessary to the regrettable cutbacks in government programs and funding that our state is facing. Tough problems require innovative solutions. The Volunteer Drivers Protection Act empowers individuals and members of the community and its non-profit human service agencies to solve problems. FRTA believes the Volunteer Drivers Protection Act will provide great and desirable assistance in solving an obvious and persistent need of the community: adequate, flexible, consumer friendly, and reliable transportation services to the public.

We therefore applaud Chairman and Senator Jim Marleau and the Committee's efforts and approval of this measure. We urge its immediate adoption. If you have any questions or needs in considering this legislation, we will of course be available and willing to provide answers to your queries.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Steven C. Hill, Chairperson of Freedom Road Transportation Authority

Jeff BROWN.

2-21-11

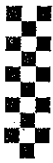
To Whom it may concern

As a parent of an individual with
development disabilities - I fully
support and agree with the
Volunteer driver Act.

Transportation is the independence,
Socialization - and offers a broader
Scope and opportunities to the individual

Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely
Mary Ann Butler
1060 Glaser Dr
Troy, MI. 48085



Jeff Brown

Feb. 21, 2011

To Whom it may concern

My name is Troy Butler,
I am an advocate for people with
disabilities.

I totally agree with the
volunteer driver act.

This legislation is very valuable
and necessary all concerned.

Thank you for taking the time
to read my letter and consider
the good this legislation will do
I fully support it.

Sincerely
Troy A. Butler
Disability Advocate

Troy Butler
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Hearts that Inspire
Hands that Serve
Homes that Endure

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March 1, 2011

Dear Senator Marleau,

This letter is written on behalf of the 150 families with developmental disabilities whom Angels' Place serves. This letter is in support of legislation that would allow volunteers of non-profit organizations to provide transportation to consumers of the non-profit without risk. Although this legislation would not eliminate liability entirely or change the required insurance required of the volunteer driver, it would go a long way towards improving community access and citizenship of some of our state's most disenfranchised and impoverished citizens; seniors and people with disabilities.

There is nothing quite as debilitating and limiting as the inability to be mobile in one's own community. With a public transportation system that does not adequately meet the employment, health, safety and well-being needs of this specialized population, the opportunity to help people get to where they need to go with the use of volunteer support would be extraordinary.

At Angels' Place we have 800 volunteers a year help with projects within the organization. If volunteers could be used to assist with transportation this would take a heavy load off the system of support and nurture natural relationships and supports; self-determination, a statewide goal of our industry. At Angels' Place we serve people who cannot drive, cannot walk to the bus stop and have work schedules or lives that do not fit into the curb or bus service schedule or fit within the various constraints of transfers and city/township limits.

To pass this bill would be an extremely positive initiative that I think we could all be proud to be a part of. It would decrease costs to the state, the individual consumer and the community at large. It would empower our citizens and build community. It simply is the right thing to do.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Loveday
Executive Director
Angels' Place

Christian Homes and Hope for Persons with Developmental Disabilities

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Re: Volunteer Drivers

Many people live without access to personal transportation, and it is often a barrier to involvement in the community. Volunteer drivers can help meet the transportation needs by expanding local mobility options.

Recruiting efforts for volunteer drivers from our perspective and experience as a Human Service Agency have been hampered by liability concerns. The Agency recognizes that volunteer drivers are an untapped asset in the community and could provide much needed transportation to fill in gaps in services for older adults and people with disabilities. At the same time, having no risk protection for these volunteers limits our capacity as a human service agency to involve them in service provision.

A bill to provide immunity from liability for personal injury and property damage to volunteers providing driving services can be a solution to the problem. It will ensure that volunteers can serve without "risk", similar to the protection available to volunteers of government agencies, like CMH. This legislation can also increase the pool of possible drivers.

We also understand that this bill does not eliminate the need for liability onscreen as retained by a non profit organization, and it does not change the required vehicle insurance by volunteer driver.

Respectfully,



Yuliya Gaydayenko
Department Director
Older Adult Services

3/02/2011

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